(a) whether there is threat to the ecology and environment in the agency areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken to protect the same during the Eleventh Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The National Environment Policy 2006 recognises the key ecological and environmental challenges the country faces including agency areas. These challenges are connected with the state of environmental resources, such as land, water, air and flora and fauna. The causes of environmental degradation include population growth, inappropriate technology and consumption choices, poverty and livelihood dependence on natural resources and development activities such as intensive agriculture, polluting industry, unplanned urbanization, etc.

(c) National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) outlining the strategy to meet the challenge of Climate Change; setting up of National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) for conservation and holistic management of river Ganga; setting up of scientific, objective and transparent processes for environmental and forest clearance of the projects; revision of National Ambient and Air Quality Standards; release of guidelines and funds of Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority for its utilisation; guidelines for convergence of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and National Afforestation Programme (NAP) for pooling of resources, technology and information for Natural Resource Management; Voluntary relocation/rehabilitation of villages and human settlements from Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks for creating inviolate space and integrity of important wildlife habitats; Additional Central Assistance for 'Accelerated Programme of Restoration and Regeneration of Forest Cover'; introduction of National Green Tribunal (NGT) Bill for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection, forest conservation, and other natural resources including compensating victims of pollution and other environmental damage are some of the major steps initiated during the current plan period.

Genetic engineering tests

3428. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of crops and their varieties that have been approved for conducting genetic engineering tests in the country; and

(b) the details of the agencies/organizations/research institutions which have been permitted to carry the experiments and the results of the experiments conducted, so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee the apex body notified under the 'Rules for Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro Organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells 1989' of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, has accorded approval for conducting genetic engineering tests with GM crops namely;

cotton, rice, okra, brinjal, potato, groundnut, tomato, corn, cabbage, cauliflower, mustard and sorghum for generation of biosafety data.

(b) The public and private institutions which have been permitted to conduct biosafety tests include; Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla, National Research Centre for Sorghum, Hyderabad; National Research Centre for Plant Biotechnology, New Delhi; Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore; University of Agriculture, Dharwad; International Crop Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics, Hyderabad; M/s Bejo Sheetal Seeds Pvt. Ltd., Jalna; M/s Pioneer Overseas Corporation Hyderabad; M/s Dow Agro Science, Mumbai; M/s Monsanto India Limited, New Delhi; M/s Bayer BioSciences Pvt., Hyderabad; M/s J. K. Agri Genetics Limited, Hyderabad; M/s Nunhems India Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon; M/s Avesthagen Ltd., Bangalore, M/s Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co. Ltd., Mumbai; M/s Sungro Seeds Research Ltd., M/s Metahelix Life Sciences, Bangalore and Delhi University. The results of the biosafety studies conducted in respect of Bt cotton and Bt Brinjal are available in the public domain (http://www.envfor.nic.in).

Suggestions of Centre for Science and Environment

†3429. SHRI PRABHAT JHA:

SHRI KAPTAN SINGH SOLANKI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Centre for Science and Environment has given such suggestions as could be useful in managing environment within the sphere of production and consumption;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government is acting upon these suggestions; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Loss of forest cover

3430. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state the details of the quantum of the loss of forest cover every year on the face of different data quoted by Government agencies in the Supreme Court, before the parliamentary committees and in the Forest Survey of India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): As per 'India State Forest Report 2009' published by Forest Survey of India, the forest cover of the country has shown a net increase of 728 km^2 (72,800 ha.) between 2005 & 2007 while the decadal change in forest cover of the country between the period 1997 and 2007 has been assessed as 31,349 km^2 (3.13 million ha.). The Government of India uses the data on the forest cover from the State of Forest Report's of Forest Survey of India before the parliamentary committees, in the Supreme Court, etc.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.